

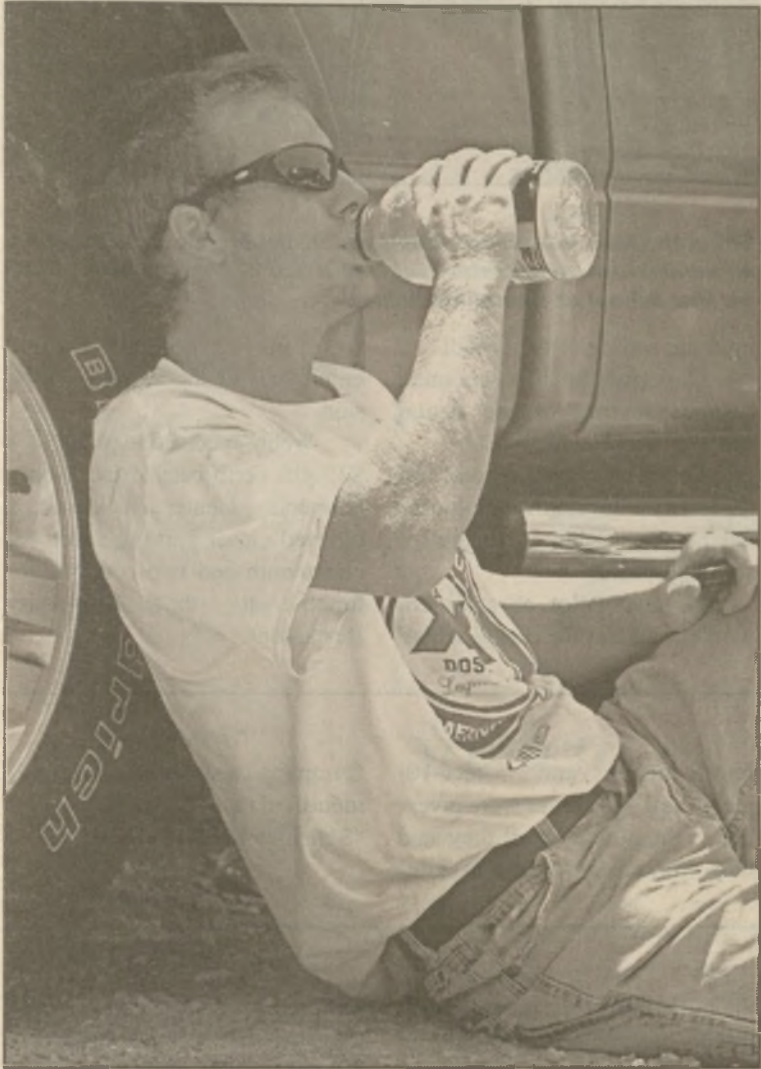
Men’s basketball
welcomes new assistant
See Sports

WEDNESDAY, JULY 19, 2006

WWW.THEALESTLE.COM

VOL. 58, No. 65

Soaring temperatures present safety hazards



KATY HARTWIG/ALESTLE
Construction worker Travis Bowling drinks a sports beverage Tuesday afternoon. Soaring temperatures have prompted outdoor workers to take precautions.

AARON SUDHOLT
NEWS EDITOR

The St. Louis area was hit with its sixth straight excessive heat warning, marking high temperatures in the 90s, according to the National Weather Service.

Dangerously high heat indexes broke 100 degrees every day since the heat warning began.

Tuesday, heat indexes were expected to rise even higher, resulting in even more oppressive weather conditions than Monday’s.

The National Weather Service’s Excessive Heat Warning issued for the St. Louis area remains in effect until 7 p.m. Thursday. Heat indexes through Thursday are expected to be between 106 and 115.

Friday temperatures are expected to drop into the low 90s and remain in the low 90s to upper 80s for at least a few days.

“There appears to be a full front going through Thursday evening,” National Weather Service Meteorologist Ben Miller said Tuesday morning. “The next three days are going to be pretty rough.”

Those without access to air conditioning should be aware of

the possibility of much higher heat indexes and seek shelter in air conditioned buildings for at least a few hours each day to relieve heat conditions.

Two cooling centers are available in Madison County for area residents without air conditioning. The centers are located at 608 West St. Louis Ave. in East Alton and 1925 Madison Ave. in Granite City.

At SIUE, a student said he tried to avoid the heat.

“(I) stay inside in the air conditioning,” junior computer science major Kit Menke said.

Another sought shelter in the water.

“I go to the pool here,” junior civil engineering major Sarah Bailey said.

According to the National Weather Service, the heat poses an especially strong risk to those working outside. The Excessive Heat Warning advises these people to remain hydrated, take frequent breaks and utilize air conditioning whenever possible in order to avoid heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

“The main thing is that you have to keep cool and you have to wear light clothing,” SIUE Health Services Head Nurse Sue Grimes said. “If you have to be

outside, be sure you keep hydrated and stay in the shade.”

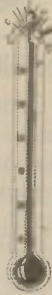
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also advises the public to avoid consuming drinks containing caffeine, alcohol or sugar, as these beverages prevent the body from becoming properly hydrated.

According to Grimes, heat exhaustion is common, while heat stroke is more serious.

“Most people can get through heat exhaustion,” she said. “You may feel faint. Heat stroke is the dangerous one. Your body can’t cool itself down.”

In addition to heat exhaustion and heat stroke, Grimes also stresses the importance of proper protection from the sun.

“You have to worry about good skin care, too,” she said.



Forecasted Highs

Wed

Thurs

98

99

National Weather Service
www.nws.noaa.gov

Solicitation scam suspected

AARON SUDHOLT
NEWS EDITOR

Two SIUE residents filed complaints to police when two men approached them asking for their money July 8 in Cougar Village.

Junior speech pathology major Jamie Ahlden said the men first posed as students at SIUE, saying they were in a competition in their speech class to get the most signatures and asked to come into her apartment to sign their signature sheet.

When she agreed, they changed their story and said they wanted her to sign forms and pay for magazines.

She said they intimidated her into buying two magazines, even though she said she would only buy one.

“I said I didn’t want to and they said I had to,” Ahlden said. “I felt it was intimidating.”

She said they wanted her to pay them in cash, and even went so far as to ask her to go to an ATM and get some, though she refused and gave them a check

she later cancelled.

According to SIUE policy, fundraisers, canvassers, solicitors, vendors and agents are forbidden to practice on university property without approval from Administrative Services, showing their credentials and identification to solicit.

SIUE Administrative Services Director Robert Vanzo said without the proper credentials, solicitors are referred to the police, usually by calling the contact number on their fliers.

“They have to have approval,” SIUE Police Lt. Kevin Schmoll said.

SIUE Police has not yet had any contact with the solicitors, Schmoll said. The solicitors themselves were only seen on campus Saturday and police reports were not filed until Monday.

Ahlden filed the report with another student, junior Jessica Ridgway. Ridgway could not be reached for comment.

“They were good at what
see SOLICITATION, page 2

Foundation raises \$23.2 million

STORMY TETREAU
NEWS STRINGER

The SIUE Foundation recently has announced that \$23.2 million has been raised by the foundation since fiscal year 2001; more money than was raised in the first 23 years of the foundation’s existence.

G. Patrick Williams, CEO of the foundation, cites innovation at the foundation as central to building the new bridges with donors and alums that accounts for the increases in giving.

“When I came, we were averaging around four or five thousand donors in our system; people giving at various levels,” Williams said. “We know that an institution about our size should have an annual fundraising of about \$5 to \$8 million and a donor base of 10,000.”

Currently the foundation has about 9,000 donors, but Williams expects more prosperity in the future.

“The difference between us and institutions of our peers is that they have been at this a lot



KATY HARTWIG/ALESTLE
G. Patrick Williams, CEO of the SIUE Foundation, explained that the foundation’s outreach contributed to its success. The foundation has raised \$23.2 million since 2001.

longer than we have,” Williams said. “We expect for our growth to continue.”

Williams said the reason for the growth is the new professionalism and outreach at the foundation.

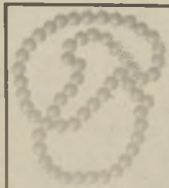
“Something different is taking place here,” Williams said. “The number one reason that

people don’t give is that they never are invited to give.”

The foundations outreach for potential donors has increased, but Williams wants to make it clear that it is not about asking for money.

“We engage in partnerships. We provide opportunities for

see FOUNDATION, page 2



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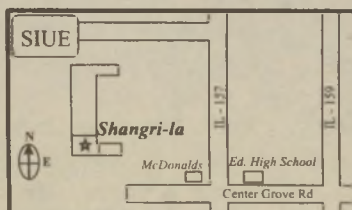
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Webb named July Employee of the Month

KATHERINE JUNG
NEWS STRINGER

Deborah Webb, administrative secretary for the Office of the Associate Dean for the School of Dental Medicine, received the July Employee of the Month award at a ceremony last Tuesday.

Associate Dean of the School of Dental Medicine Bruce Rotter, who supervises Webb, nominated her.

"I'm honored to have been nominated by my supervisor, and I'm proud to work at the dental school," Webb said.

Webb has worked for SIUE for 14 years. Webb says she was persuaded to come here to work by her friends and family.

"I have a sister-in-law and friends that were employed by SIUE, so I heard a lot of good things about the university," Webb said.

Webb has worked for School of Dental Medicine for the last several years and she attributes her enjoyment of her job to the



KATY HARTWIG/ALESTLE

Deborah Webb was named Employee of the Month for July. She is an administrative secretary for the Office of the Associate Dean for the School of Dental Medicine.

intimate setting of the school.

"I personally like the small campus feeling of the dental school," Webb said.

She also says the bond she shares with her fellow employees has helped her enjoy her job for so many years.

"I have a lot of great co-workers here at the dental school

who, in my opinion, are all employees of the month," Webb said.

Webb received a plaque, a \$25 gift certificate to the Morris University Center Bookstore, a coveted closer parking space for one month and two coupons for lunch at the University Restaurant.

SOLICITATION

from page 1

they do," Ahlden said.

Ahlden described the suspects as being in their early 20s, white and both between 5-

feet-8-inches and 5-feet-10-inches tall. No names were given, but in the police report they said they worked for "Freedom Sales

Company," and Ahlden said they identified themselves working for "Sunshine Sales Company."

FOUNDATION

from page 1

people," Williams explained. "Most people who have a desire to give reach for the checkbook and we say 'stop' - talk to us because there are many ways to partnership beyond checkbooks."

It appears the outreach has paid off. In recent years, gifts have come in a variety of forms. An art collection, valued at \$6 million, was donated in 2002-03, and recently, a retired professor and his wife gave seven homes to SIUE when leaving the area.

"We sold the houses and we put the money into a charitable trust. They will get the interest for the rest of their lives. When

they die, the trust fund, worth three quarters of a million dollars, will be ours," Williams said.

Emphasizing the foundations commitment to work in partnership to "meet donors' philanthropic goals," Williams said that 95 percent of donations are restricted, with the donor giving some stipulation about how the money will be used.

An example of such a gift came from Mark and Carol Mestemacher, who donated \$2 million, the largest cash gift in SIUE history, "to help build a 56,000-square-foot state-of-the-

art complex for the Cougar wrestling team," according to a Feb. 21 Alestle article.

Not all gifts are so large. Alums accounted for 63 percent of all gifts last year.

"It's a combination of everything," Williams said. "Whether it is at the \$2 million mark or 25 bucks, we consider it all meaningful gifts."

Money raised by the foundation is used "for scholarships, research, student awards, athletics and funds to support academic units," according to a July 11 SIUE press release.

Police Incidents

Traffic

7-10

Police issued Allison L. Schmale a citation for speeding on South University Drive.

Police issued Alice M. Jones a citation for the operation of an uninsured motor vehicle on South University Drive.

Police issued David Ramey citations for not wearing a seat belt and the operation of an uninsured motor vehicle on University Drive.

7-12

Police issued Todd Loeffler a citation for disobeying a stop sign on North University Drive.

Police issued Shelly Collins a citation for the operation of an uninsured motor vehicle on South University Drive.

7-13

Police issued Thomas C. Phillips III a citation for the operation of an uninsured motor vehicle on South University Drive.

Other

7-10

Police arrested Carla Spiller after she turned herself in on an active SIUE warrant for failure to appear on a charge of the operation of an uninsured motor vehicle.

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We reserve the right to edit letters for grammar and content. However, great care will be taken to ensure that the message of the letter is not lost or altered.

Letters to the editor will not be printed anonymously except under extreme circumstances.

The Alestle is a member of the Illinois College Press Association, the Associated Collegiate Press and U-WIRE.

The name Alestle is an acronym derived from the names of the three campus locations of SIUE: Alton, East St. Louis and Edwardsville.

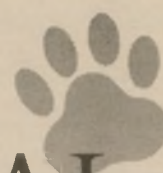
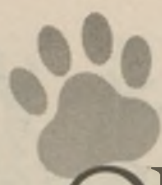
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Have a comment?

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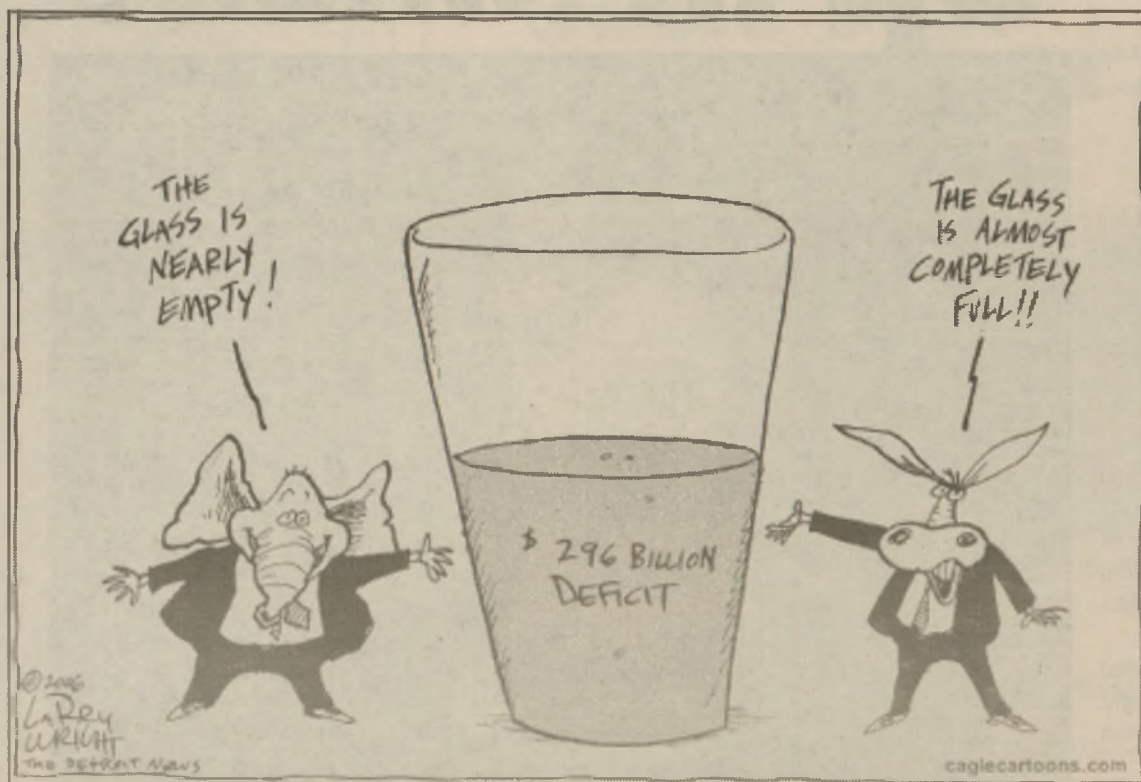
OPINIONS & EDITORIAL

WEDNESDAY, JULY 19, 2006

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3

POLITICAL CARTOON



Student expresses weapon concerns

I am writing to you concerning the growing problem of handgun violence in America. The Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence educates the public about handgun violence and works to reduce death and injury caused by the easy accessibility of firearms in our society.

The death rates are continuously getting higher. In 2003 (the most recent year for which data is available), there were 1,146 gun deaths in the state of Illinois, a 7 percent decrease from 2002 Illinois gun deaths. The 2003 Illinois gun deaths

included: 696 homicides (60 percent of all Ill. gun deaths), 404 suicides (36 percent of all Ill. gun deaths), and 23 unintentional shootings, 8 legal intervention and 15 of undetermined intent (4 percent of all Ill. gun deaths combined).

We could possibly be losing our future doctors and lawyers due to such ignorance. If we had more strict laws on handgun possession, we might be able to lower acts of violence. More accidents happen with wrongful possession than with responsible owners. The whole idea of laws is that they should protect the safety of citizens. My problem is that the death tolls are constantly rising, and a lot of these deaths

may be accidents.

Someone might say they have the right to bear arms or the right of self-defense, and use these rights to manipulate the system. One should not be able to use these rights for the harm that they have done. Self-defense is one thing, but crying self-defense and lying is another. The moral of this is that handgun violence can be controlled if people just open their eyes to the truth and work on bettering the world. Thank you for your time and I hope you will take to heed what I have to say.

Christin Davis
Sophomore
Nursing

Student denounces video game violence

Video games are becoming more and more violent and they are part of the reason children are doing more violent things.

One example is the study of aggression done by the National Institute of Media and Family, which stated that studies measuring aggressive behaviors after playing violent video games (compared with behaviors displayed after playing nonviolent games) have shown that violent games increase aggression.

In one study of college students, students played either a violent or nonviolent game. After playing this game, they were given a competitive reaction time task in which they played against another student. If they beat the

other student, they got to deliver a loud "noise blast," and were able to control how loud and how long the noise blast would be. Students who had previously played the violent video game delivered longer noise blasts to their opponents.

Children with the lowest hostility scores are almost 10 times more likely to have been involved in physical fights if they play a lot of violent video games than if they do not play violent games (38 percent compared 4 percent). In fact, the least hostile children who play a lot of violent video games were more likely to be involved in fights than the most hostile children who do not play violent video games.

Some may say the video game industries should not have to censor video games. Parents

need to educate their children and let them know that what they play on video games is not real because as long as children have easy access to these games they will continue to play them.

I propose that the industry makes their games less violent and parents take responsibility and make sure their child doesn't have access to these games.

I believe that if my solution is not put into effect then the industry will continue to sell violent video games and aggression in children will continue to rise. The principle that is at stake is that violence among children needs to be decreased.

Charmaine Walker
Freshman
Elementary Education

Student proposes parking structure

The issue that has been on my mind is the parking situation at SIUE. Each year, enrollment increases and, in turn, parking spaces decrease. Such circumstances allocate for very unsafe conditions here on campus. My proposed solution to the problem

would be to build or create some kind of parking area that goes up and not out. I know that process may take some time, effort and even money. It is my belief that this parking development would be worth it not only for the safety, but for the peace of mind it would provide to not only the students, but faculty as well. I believe that the university is obligated to provide basic resources, such as parking, that are sufficient, efficient and safe. With a different, more enclosed and better lit parking area, it would cut down on the assaults and break-ins on campus because of stronger security due to more frequent patrol by the police and video surveillance.

The construction of the project may cause an increase in students' fees, but I think it will pay off in the long run. The safety of faculty and students should be a top priority at SIUE. With the parking as it is now, security must patrol a huge area. With this proposed parking structure, security will have a more efficient way of patrolling. Along with a smaller area to control, crimes committed will decrease. Students can feel confident that their personal belongings will remain in their car while they are away. Students and faculty will also take comfort to know that as the evening hours approach and the sun goes down, there will be security close if needed. Opportunities for criminals will essentially diminish.

It is true that more than one building may be needed; however, even with multiple buildings, the area being patrolled by security will be lessened. With less ground to survey, students and faculty will be safe from harm.

Marvin Childs
Junior
Sociology



Up in smoke

COURTNEY RAKERS
MANAGING EDITOR

The walls are closing in on smokers across the United States. Restaurants, hotels and bars are jumping on the smoke-free bandwagon and banishing cigarettes from their establishments. The dangers of smoking are well-known, yet many students continue to smoke.

Freshmen Whitney Sauerhage and Nicole Koerkenmeier each have a pack-a-day habit. Although they are aware of the dangers of smoking, they seem unconcerned about the immediate risks to their health.

Sauerhage said she is not worried about the dangers of her habit "right now," but that she did think about it from time to time.

"You see the commercials and sometimes they make you think," Sauerhage said. "But most of the time I don't worry about it."

Perhaps student smokers should be worried.

According to the American Lung Association's Web site, "cigarette smoking has been identified as the most important source of preventable morbidity and premature mortality worldwide."

"Smoking-related diseases claim an estimated 438,000 American lives each year, including those affected indirectly, such as babies born prematurely due to prenatal maternal smoking and victims of secondhand exposure to tobacco's carcinogens."



Senior English education major Jessica Putlak takes a smoke break Tuesday outside of Lovejoy Library.

ANDY RATHNOW/ALESTLE

Koerkenmeier said she has cut back in the past, but stress from school sometimes gets the better of her. She plans to quit soon, but has no set date or cessation plan.

Sauerhage said she will quit when she gets married and begins to plan a family, but again, not right now. According to the American Lung Association's Web site, Sauerhage would be in the minority if she actually quit.

"Only about 30 percent of women who smoke stop smoking when they find out they are pregnant; the proportion of quitters is highest among married women and women with higher levels of education," according to the site. "Smoking during pregnancy declined in 2003 to 10.7 percent of women giving birth, down 42 percent from 1990."

"Smoking in pregnancy accounts for an estimated 20 to 30 percent of low-birth weight babies, up to 14 percent of preterm deliveries and some 10 percent of all infant deaths. Even apparently healthy, full-term babies of smokers have been found to be born with narrowed airways and curtailed lung function," according to the site.

Students may find smoking on campus more difficult in the semesters to come.

The Tobacco Task Force at SIUE is beginning the first phase of its smoking cessation program this fall. The task force is working with Health

see SMOKING, page 5

Report says there is no safe level of secondhand smoke

TONY SAPOCHETTI
THE DAILY VIDETTE

Normal, Ill. (U-WIRE) — A new Surgeon General's report claims there is no safe level of secondhand smoke. This may end the debate of whether or not inhaling smoke involuntarily is harmful to nonsmokers.

In the report, which was made public on June 27, U.S. Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona said nonsmokers who are exposed to any form of secondhand smoke, especially at home or work, are at an increased risk of developing heart disease by 25 to 30 percent and lung cancer by 20 to 30 percent.

The report also says even brief exposure to secondhand smoke can cause immediate harm, and the only way to prevent the side effects of the toxins found in secondhand smoke is to completely eliminate smoking indoors.

Elise Oaks, health initiative

representative for the American Cancer Society, said the report seems to represent and solidify the facts that are commonly known throughout the public.

"This really is the first report on secondhand smoke to come out in 30 years, and it pretty much confirmed what we already knew about secondhand smoke and the levels of toxins in the air," Oaks said. "It confirms the fact of why a lot of cities are going smoke-free and that there are no ventilation systems which will protect against secondhand smoke."

Oaks also said the report commented on how secondhand smoke may lead to other forms of diseases and deaths, such as sudden infant death syndrome. The main conclusion in which Oaks was able to discuss and

report to others was the fact that secondhand smoke has the potential to kill.

"There have been several studies over the years that confirm it as well, but this one really seems to put it into the public eye," Oaks said. "I believe

"I believe everybody has the right to breathe smoke-free air, and they should be in an environment that allows them to do so."

~Elise Oaks,
American Cancer Society

everybody has the right to breathe smoke-free air, and they should be in an environment that allows them to do so."

The known effects of secondhand smoke have been widely debated, and seem to be the main argument in whether or

not a city or county should ban smoking in any public environment.

Now that the facts are published scientifically, Oaks said this is the main reason why organizations, such as the American Cancer Society and American Lung Association, are trying to establish smoke-free cities in Illinois.

Becky Powell, health educator for the Community Cancer Center in Normal said this report will definitely change the opinions and concerns of people who may have been initially against the citywide smoking ban.

"This could hurt all those opposing the ban and not believing the science and reports the Bloomington-Normal smoking coalition presented," Powell said. "This is a pretty good resource that secondhand smoke is a hazard, and the people

opposing the ban will probably have a hard time disputing what the Surgeon General has presented."

Kathy Drea, director of public policy for the American Lung Association, said the report provides substantial proof for the various arguments that medical related organizations have been making for quite some time.

"This just reinforces the things that the American Lung Association has been saying for years," Drea said. "The highest medical officer in the world has come out with this report giving evidence to the fact that there is no such thing as a risk-free environment around secondhand smoke."

Drea also presented a document in which six main conclusions were made from the report. The conclusion documented was secondhand smoke causes serious diseases such as lung cancer, heart

see SECONDHAND, page 5

smoking truths

* Smoking costs the U.S. over \$167 billion each year in health-care costs including \$92 billion in mortality-related productivity losses and \$75.5 billion in excess medical expenditures.

* Tobacco advertising also plays an important role in encouraging young people to begin a lifelong addiction to smoking before they are old enough to fully understand its long-term health risk. Approximately 90 percent of smokers begin smoking before the age of 21.

* About 8.6 million people in the U.S. have at least one serious illness caused by smoking. That means that for every person who dies of a smoking-related disease, there are 20 more people who suffer from at least one serious illness associated with smoking.

* In 2004, 22 percent of high school students were current smokers. Over 8 percent of middle school students were current smokers in 2004.

Information Courtesy of the
American Lung Association Web site

SMOKING

from page 4

Services to offer smoking cessation medication to faculty and staff to help them quit.

The task force's goal is to provide the support to help faculty and staff quit during the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout Thursday, Nov. 16.

Although it remains unclear whether or not the task force will recommend a university-wide smoking ban, Tobacco Task Force Chair Malcolm Goldsmith has said he hopes to put an end to "walking through clouds of smoke when enter(ing) a building."

Sauerhage said a ban

wouldn't change her habits.

"I'd still smoke," she said.

For Koerkenmeier, a ban might make a difference.

"I'd consider quitting," she said.

Last summer, St. Louis County voted down an attempt to ban smoking in all public buildings, but a new study emphasizing the dangers of secondhand smoke in any amount may give the issue a second wind in weeks to come.

For more information on the dangers of cigarette smoking and secondhand smoke, visit www.lungusa.org or call Health Services at 650-2842.

SECONDHAND

from page 4

disease and respiratory illness.

Other conclusions included there is no risk-free environment to secondhand smoke exposure. secondhand smoke has substantial and immediate adverse effects on the cardiovascular system. establishing smoke-free

workplaces is the only effective way to ensure that secondhand smoke exposure does not occur in the workplace, smoke-free workplace policies are effective in reducing exposure and that smoke-free policies and regulations do not have an adverse economic impact on the medical industry.

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~Charles Barkley*



Cougars find new face, lose old on sideline

MATTHEW BRUCE
SPORTS EDITOR

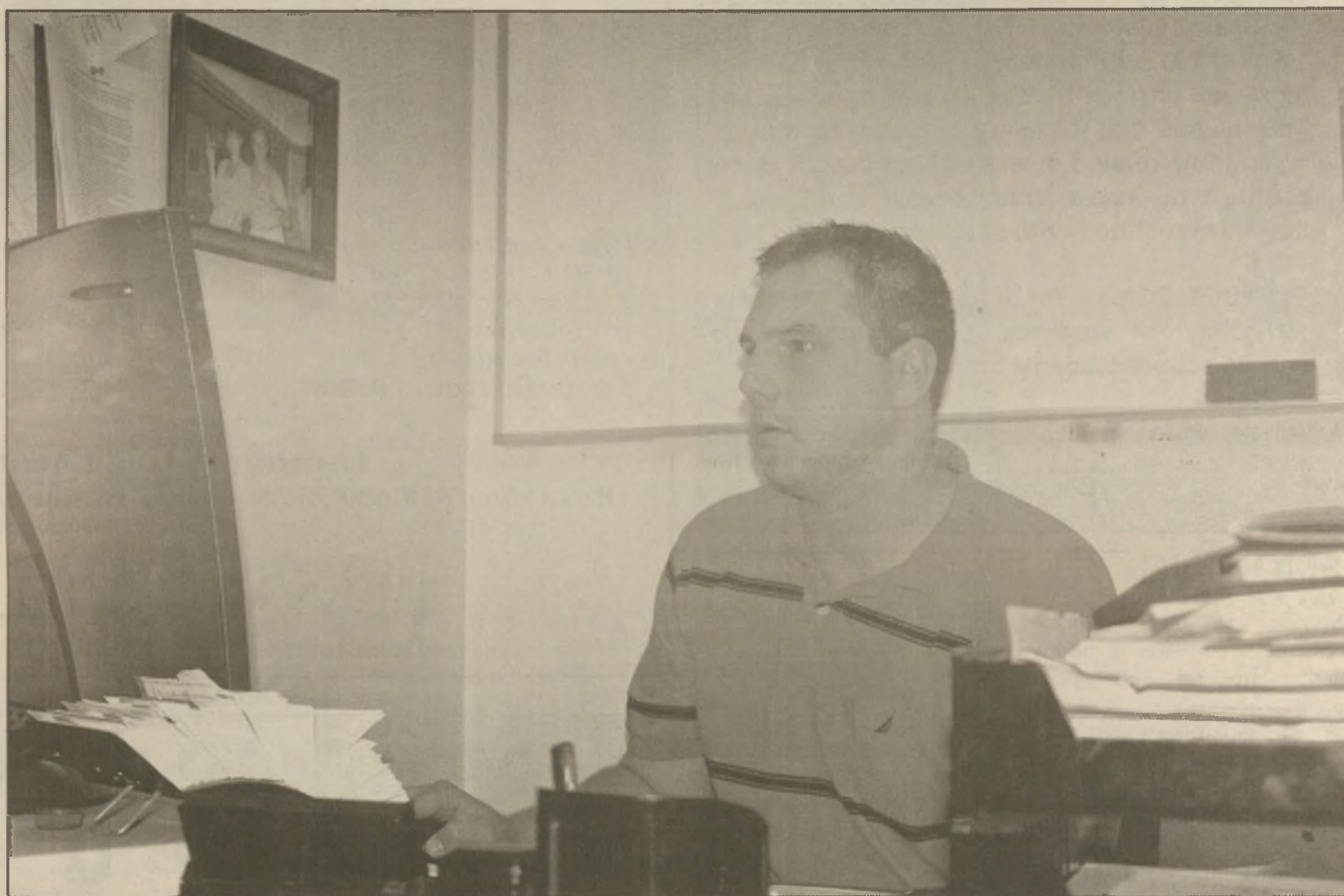
It has been a busy summer for the SIUE men's basketball program. The team has had a bit of a shake-up to its lineup and that does not include changes to the roster of players.

The Cougars, who are coming off their best season in school history, will have different look on their bench next season as the SIUE coaching staff has undergone a revamping of sorts.

The Cougars announced the hiring of Ben Wierzba as an assistant coach Tuesday, July 11. One day earlier, Eastern Illinois University Head Coach Mike Miller announced that Marcus Belcher, who served as an SIUE assistant coach for the last two seasons, would replace Kwanza Johnson as assistant coach at EIU.

Adding to that is the fact that Mark Allaria, who had been an SIUE assistant since Simmons took over in 2002, announced that he was leaving to join the coaching staff at Edwardsville High School in April.

see COACHES, page 7



ANDY RATHNOW/ALESTLE

New SIUE men's basketball assistant coach Ben Wierzba sits in his new office Tuesday afternoon in the Vadalabene Center. Wierzba joined the Cougars' coaching staff Tuesday, July 11.

Women's tennis team signs three

GEOFF SCHARDAN
SPORTS STRINGER

Coming off a rough rookie season as head coach of the SIUE women's tennis team, Bryan Belt made an announcement recently that may help turn things around for the Cougars.

Niebur is a graduate from Edwardsville High School, where she qualified for state three times. In her final three seasons with the Tigers, she finished third in the sectionals championship and was second team All-Southwestern Conference.

Clark, a graduate from

named an All-Area performer by the Belleville News-Democrat. Also while at Belleville West, she was named the Outstanding Female Student Athlete of the Year.

"She comes from a winning program and will bring a winning attitude to the team," Belt said. "Her doubles play is strong, and she'll be a wild card in singles play for us."

Laird was also a four-time state qualifier and a two-time Most Valuable Player at Normal Community West High School. She was also the Big Twelve Conference champion in 2005.

The Cougars finished last season with a 1-8 mark and went winless in the Great Lakes Valley Conference. They kick off the 2006-07 campaign Friday, Sept. 22, competing in the Intercollegiate Tennis Association Mid-America Regional Tournament.

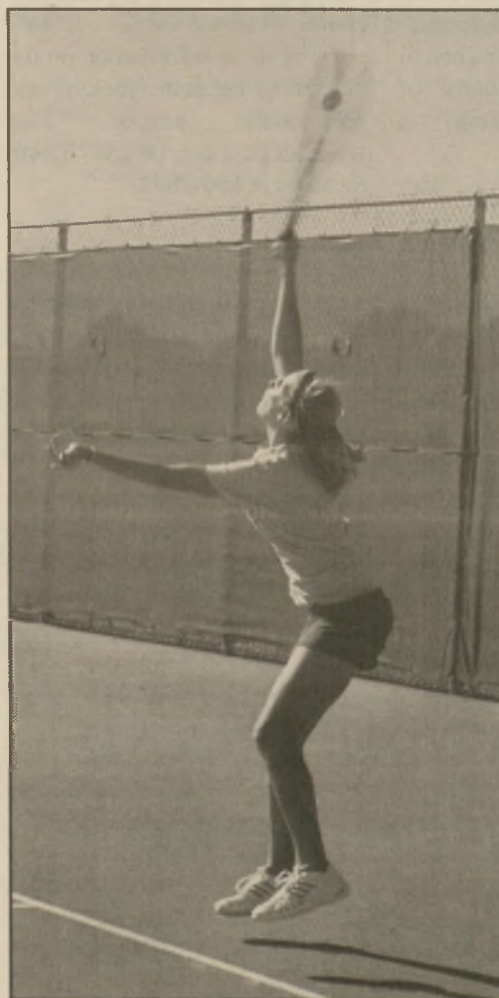
"She comes from a winning program and will bring a winning attitude to the team."

~SIUE Head Coach Bryan Belt on new recruit Stephanie Clark

SIUE signed three prep standouts to next season's roster Monday.

Edwardsville native Amanda Niebur, Stephanie Clark from Belleville and Bloomington standout Kelsey Laird will bring their rackets to SIUE in the fall.

Belleville West High School, is another outstanding player from the area. In all four years with the Maroons she was a qualifier for the state championship and also named to the All-Southwestern Conference tennis team. In her senior year she was



KATIE GROTH/ALESTLE
An SIUE women's tennis player jumps up to serve a volley during a tennis match at SIUE last fall. The Cougars finished 1-8 last season and were winless in the Great Lakes Valley Conference. The team's three new players (Amanda Niebur, Stephanie Clark and Kelsey Laird) look to add to SIUE's success for the upcoming season.

COACHES

from page 6



COURTESY OF SIUE PHOTO SERVICES

Former SIUE men's basketball assistant coach Marcus Belcher, right, takes a picture with Ryan Belcher, left, and an SIUE supporter after the Cougars won the Great Lakes Regional Championship March 14 in Rensselaer, Ind. Belcher became the assistant coach at Eastern Illinois University Monday, July 10.

That means that Simmons will be the lone member of the SIUE coaching staff remaining from last year's team, which advanced to the NCAA Division II Elite Eight.

Wierzba comes to SIUE from Lewis University where he served as an assistant coach for two seasons.

"We're excited," Simmons said. "He brings a lot of experience and knowledge and real enthusiasm."

Wierzba's coaching experience includes time at the University of Northern Dakota as a graduate assistant, St. Joseph's College of Indiana as an assistant coach and the United States Military Academy as the director of basketball operations under Jim Crews, the same coach who guided Simmons during his playing days at the University of Evansville.

"He's got a very similar background and philosophy," Simmons said.

Wierzba is no stranger to SIUE or the game of basketball. He comes from a strong family lineage of hardwood prowess. His father, Tom, was one of the most successful prep coaches in Illinois, collecting 547 career wins at Farmington High School. Wierzba's brother was a stellar high school player who played for Austin Peay State University, Simmons said.

Wierzba himself played for SIUE in 1998-99 and averaged 12.6 points per game, earning an All-Great Lakes Valley Conference honorable mention bid. He was a pure jump shooter for the Cougars, leading the team in shooting percentage from beyond the three-point arc and the free-throw line. Wierzba stayed at SIUE and served as a student assistant coach the following season.

"I'm excited," Wierzba said. "Coming to a situation like this, being back in Edwardsville and working for Coach Simmons, I've always had an interest."

Belcher, also a former standout player at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, helped guide the Cougars to two consecutive NCAA Division II Tournament appearances during his tenure at SIUE.

"I can't say anything but awesome things about him," Simmons said. "He was a great coach on the court, a great recruiter. He was really close to all the players. Of all the people I've been around, he was really loyal and enthusiastic. He's a winner and honestly, a lot of our success was a direct reflection of him."

Simmons said he was not sure yet whether the Cougars would hire another coach for the upcoming season, which begins Wednesday, Nov. 15, in Peoria against Bradley University.

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The Alestle is looking for sports writers to cover and report on the Cougars.

E-mail Matthew Bruce at alestlesports@gmail.com

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